

Message Text

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43

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

SS-20 USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-14 OMB-01 DRC-01 NIC-01 /149 W

----- 095962

R 111254Z DEC 73

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6304

INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 14522

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SU, IS

SUBJECT: SOVIET-ISRAELI RELATIONSHIP

1. DURING OFF-RECORD DISCUSSION AT INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF STRATEGIC STUDIES DECEMBER 10, BRITISH CABINET OFFICE OFFICIAL SPOKE OF LONG MEETING HE HAD HAD WITH HIGH SOVIET INTELLIGENCE OFFICIALS IN MOSCOW DURING FONSEC DOUGLAS-HOME'S RECENT VISIT THERE. HE SAID OFFICIALS SPOKE OF GREAT DIFFICULTY THEY HAD IN GETTING RELIABLE INFORMATION OF ANY KIND ON ISRAEL, IN ABSENCE OF SOVIET EMBASSY THERE. THIS SEEMED TO INDICATE TO BRITISH OFFICIAL A DESIRE AT LEAST IN SOME SOVIET OFFICIAL CIRCLES FOR REESTABLISHMENT OF RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL AT EARLIEST PRACTICABLE DATE.

2. BRITISH PROFESSOR BERNARD LEWIS, WHO WAS VISITING ISRAEL ABOUT SAME TIME, SPOKE OF MEETING (HIS FIRST) WITH MENACHEM BEGIN, THE OPPOSITION LIKUD-HERUT LEADER. BEGIN REPORTEDLY TOOK LINE DISCOUNTING SOVIET THREAT DURING RECENT WAR AND POST WAR PERIOD. HE HAD ASKED RHETORICALLY WHETHER ANYONE COULD REALLY BELIEVE SOVIETS WERE PREPARED "TO INVADE ISRAEL WITH SEVEN DIVISIONS". LEWIS REMARKED THIS WAS HIS FIRST EXPERIENCE OF SUCH
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SILLY HYPERBOLE. HE SAID BEGIN CONTINUED TO RELY FOR

ISRAEL'S FUTURE SECURITY ON TIME-HONORED ISRAELI MILITARY
STRENGTH, DISCOUNTING PROSPECTS FOR PEACE SETTLEMENT.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS ESTABLISHMENT, FOREIGN RELATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 11 DEC 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: mcintyresh
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973LONDON14522
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: LONDON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19731232/aaaaaxmn.tel
Line Count: 65
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: mcintyresh
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 23 JUL 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <23-Jul-2001 by thomasv0>; APPROVED <13-Sep-2001 by mcintyresh>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SOVIET-ISRAELI RELATIONSHIP
TAGS: PFOR, UR, IS
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005